UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/45/1002
26 April 1991
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Forty-fifth session
Agenda item 86

SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In its resolution 45/257 of 21 December 1990, the United Nations General Assembly made an appeal to Member States, international financial institutions, the specialized agencies and organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to respond generously and urgently to the needs of Haiti at this crucial time in its history.

2. In addition, the General Assembly requested me to consult the Government of Haiti as soon as possible concerning appropriate initiatives for the launching of an emergency programme in Haiti and to inform it of the outcome of such consultations.

3. Accordingly, I appointed Mr. Paul-Marc Henry to head a mission to prepare such an emergency programme. In that connection, he made an initial visit to Haiti from 21 to 29 January 1991. This visit confirmed that the new President wished to promote the welfare of the poorest social groups, namely, the inhabitants of rural areas, who continue to make up the bulk of the population despite the exodus to the few urban population centres and to countries abroad. The mission's second, and main, visit took place in March 1991, when the new Government had been in office for several weeks and the ministers were beginning to tackle their new tasks.

4. The Government of Haiti designated as liaison officer, under the authority of the Office of the President and the Minister for Planning, Mr. Hermogène Durand, who was present at all the interviews and working meetings organized by the Office of the President and the UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Carroll Long.

5. These consultations were held with the ministers of the various ministerial departments concerned, experts and managers of various programmes

READEX FICHE

of the United Nations system that were under way or under preparation, and representatives of bilateral programmes in Haiti that were either under way or under preparation.

6. At the beginning of the consultations, the representative of the Haitian Government provided the head of the mission with a preliminary document containing a list of projects that might be included in an overall package of emergency activities for which international financing was sought, without prejudice to the executing agencies. The list of projects, which is provisional and non-exhaustive in that new projects may be added and others adjusted in the light of subsequent technical consultations, is intended to illustrate the basic approach and possible procedures for implementation which will form the basis of the emergency programme.

7. The very concept of emergency should be understood as referring to the speedy meeting of basic needs as expressed by the local entities concerned.

8. Indeed, in accordance with the fundamental guidelines on development policy which the President set forth in his programme upon taking office, the aim is to put into practice a policy of decentralization (entailing a degree of administrative devolution), which would harness the development energies of local institutions and groups and make maximum use of the available pool of manpower for the benefit of the local communities which will be ultimately responsible for the financial and operational management of the projects in question.

9. Apart from this list, the preliminary documents that have been submitted provide a general idea of what an uncomplicated and effective structure for supervision might be which respects the responsibilities to be assumed at the local level.

10. It emerges from the preliminary study of the initial document that was carried out with assistance from competent experts involved in the implementation of the various projects of the current UNDP programme that the main features of the proposed programme are as follows:

(a) The emergency programme needs to be carried out as quickly as is technically feasible and its timetable must mesh with the transitional period set by the Government for the preparation and approval of the new budget for 1991-1992. Specifically, bearing in mind the planned review of the Government's overall economic and financial programme that is to be submitted to the June 1991 session of the Consultative Group organized by the World Bank, the emergency programme should be launched as soon as it is approved by the General Assembly, i.e., in May.

(b) The emergency programme must not entail any recurrent costs for the Government or hamper the normal operation of the Administration in its relations with the population and its current restructuring efforts. The planned projects must have a visible impact in their respective areas and facilitate, in the short and medium term, the implementation of the

Government's regular programmes which have already been approved under bilateral or multilateral arrangements.

(c) In line with these criteria and the proposed projects, the planned programme concerns primarily three areas: the first is communications, and in particular, local trunk roads which will help to end the isolation of some areas before the next rainy season. The second is water supply, covering improvements, maintenance and the development of new resources. The third is education, involving rehabilitation of existing facilities and the construction of new ones. In short, provision is made for 700 kilometres of roads, water supply for 60 localities and the rehabilitation of an undecided number of school facilities and buildings. The average duration of the proposed projects is 3 months and the average cost, about $100,000. It is expected that the implementation of the programme will create some 3 million work/days of employment.

11. This relatively modest programme in terms of its overall financing presupposes action by the Government to ensure that its technical and administrative units will be functionally adapted to the tasks at hand. The Government itself must embark upon a medium- and long-term policy of reorganizing all the ministerial departments responsible for economic and social development, including the department of education. A reform of the latter is under preparation at the present time.

12. In the immediate term, the programme would make it possible to give the people tangible proof that both the Government and the international community, beginning with the United Nations, are strongly committed to the democratization of the development process, the ultimate aim of which is to raise the people's standard of living through full participation by the people in decisions which affect them.

13. In line with the very spirit of the General Assembly resolution referred to above, the aim is therefore to provide technical and economic assistance to Haiti in order to help it overcome its serious economic and social problems.

14. For my part, I can only confirm the diagnosis made, inter alia, by all the agencies concerned and by the countries which are major contributors to Haiti's development programmes, to the effect that not only is the situation urgent but it appears to be worsening as a result of economic and social factors which Haiti on its own is not able to control, let alone do away with.

15. A critical threshold has been reached in rural and urban areas alike. A few specific examples will serve to illustrate the deterioration of the economy in Haiti, where the per capita GDP has been declining since 1980 and where three quarters of the children suffer from malnutrition.

16. During its stay in the country, the mission observed, inter alia, that the country's major highway was barely passable in some sections to the north and south of the town of Gonaïves. It also noted the existence of numerous leaks in the water system in the city of Port-au-Prince, which, in some cases,

have existed for months and, in one case, for two years. The resulting low water pressure deprives whole groups of the population of running water. For example, the University Hospital in Port-au-Prince, the only public hospital that is left in this city of more than 1.5 million following the recent fire at another major hospital, is still without running water. Major public sanitation projects are under way in a part of the city, but they will not be enough to improve the appalling conditions that exist in the slum areas.

17. The mission experienced at first hand the effects of the lack of electricity during its visit to Jacmel, in the southern part of the country. The town had been without electricity for two days, because the power plant was out of fuel. The local officials were unable to obtain any, as they found the town treasury empty when they took office. It was the first time that such a thing happened in this town, the first in the country to obtain electric service 15 years ago. The situation was much the same in Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien where electric power was provided by the city for only a few hours a day and where buying a generator, which most people and companies cannot afford to do, was the only way to ensure a normal daily life.

18. In the area of education, the mission saw evidence of the lack of schools and the extremely delapidated condition of the existing facilities. Half the children of school age do not attend school and of those who are able to attend, many do not finish their primary schooling.

19. With regard to agriculture, Haiti does not have enough seed for the next growing season, because everything has been eaten. Farmers often do not have even the most basic implements (hatchets and pickaxes). They are no longer able to feed their livestock and there is a danger that endemic diseases such as anthrax and rabies will become more prevalent.

20. Example after example could be given. As the Minister for Planning has rightly pointed out, even though Haiti has not been torn by war, or devastated by a cyclone like some of its neighbours, it is facing a similar disaster, as it is without basic public services and must rebuild its entire society. For the present, Haiti is not seeking billions of dollars but rather some tens of millions so that some action can be taken while waiting for traditional approaches with bilateral and multilateral donors to give a boost to the country's economy.

21. Emergency measures are therefore required as an expression of international solidarity to reverse the current trends which are causing the accelerated impoverishment of the majority of the population, for whom the only safety valve would seem to be migration from the countryside to the capital or, in the case of some active and enterprising individuals, emigration abroad. The appeal which the General Assembly could issue would be addressed not only to the Member States which are already actively involved in providing technical and financial assistance to Haiti but also to other Governments, as well as governmental and non-governmental public and private organizations likely to participate directly, through financial or technical contributions, in the implementation of projects.

22. The government authorities, who are in the process of preparing a medium-term plan for a five-year period, intend to continue refining the programme, which covers all the spheres of competence of the various ministerial departments. It is expected that the package of proposals drawn up after consultation with the international organizations and Governments which have stated their intention of assisting the Haitian Government in its reconstruction and development effort, will be presented to the forthcoming meeting of the Consultative Group organized by the World Bank scheduled to take place in June in Paris. Needless to say, the launching of the emergency programme must not in any way affect the planned time-frame. As will be recalled, the purpose of the emergency programme is to give local communities a tangible sign of the Government's determination not to delay the speedy commencement of specific activities which will, of course, form part of the medium- and long-term programmes aimed at meeting the urgent needs of the people.

23. Having provided the people of Haiti with the electoral assistance which they requested, the United Nations must respond to its appeal and help to carry on, in the economic and social spheres, the work of democratization which began so auspiciously with the holding, in conditions of calm, of free and fair elections.